

FRONTIERS OF SOLITUDE

Expedition to Finnmark, Norway 20th – 30th September 2015

Some general information

On arrival in Oslo you will need to collect your luggage and pass through customs before boarding your flight to Alta. This is because small, regional airports in Norway do not have their own customs station.

Temperatures in northern Norway in September normally hover around 6°C on average so it is important to dress accordingly, especially since you will be spending quite a bit of time outdoors. Also note that it can feel quite a bit colder, especially near the coast. Bring wool base layers, a hat, gloves, rain gear, covers for equipment and practical shoes (ideally hiking boots).

Cigarettes and alcohol are both very expensive in Norway and even more so in the north, so it could be a good idea to bring some cigarettes if you smoke. Vegetarian and vegan food is not readily available in the north; almost all meals will contain some form of meat.

Everyone will be traveling in the same van, so it is important to not bring too much luggage.

Most places take credit or debit cards; there is no need to bring large amounts of cash.

It is possible to see the Northern Lights between 17:00 and 02:00 at night from September to March although there is no guarantee that they will be visible during your trip. If the lights are visible they can usually be seen for around 15-30 minutes, although a single display can sometimes last a few hours. A forecast of northern light activity can be found here: <http://www.gi.alaska.edu/AuroraForecast/Europe/>

Alta

[Alta Airport](#) is the busiest airport in Finnmark, Norway's largest and northernmost county. Alta itself has just under 20 000 inhabitants and is the largest city in the county, located on the southern end of the Alta fjord at the mouth of the Alta River. Because of its large population Alta is an important centre of trade and services in the region.

Alta was the site of the world's first northern lights observatory in the late 18th century, and is particularly suited to observing the northern lights because of its dry climate.

In addition to the northern lights the municipality of Alta is known for [its rock-carvings](#), with several locations designated as UNESCO prehistoric world heritage sites. The oldest carvings date to roughly 4200 BC while the most recent are dated approximately 500 BC.

FRONTIERS OF SOLITUDE

Expedition to Finnmark, Norway 20th – 30th September 2015

Kautokeino

Kautokeino (Guovdageaidnu) is a town in Finnmark (population of around 1300) that is located 130km (1h 40m drive) south of Alta. It serves as the administrative seat of Kautokeino municipality, the most sparsely populated municipality in Norway with only 0,3 people per square kilometre. The Kautokeino River runs through Finnmarksvidda, Norway's largest plateau, covering approximately 22 000 square kilometres of mostly untouched wilderness.

The majority of inhabitants have Sami as their first language and the municipality is also the site of several important Sami institutions such as the [Sami Archives](#), [The Sami National Theatre](#) and [The Sami University College](#). Reindeer herding is the main source of income in addition to farming (mainly milk production).

Biedjovággi

Biedjovággi Mine is located roughly one hour from Kautokeino by car (36km). The mine is no longer active: only a single building still remains and most of the pits have been filled with water. The mine was an open pit copper mine that operated in two periods; first from 1969-75 and then from 1985-91. It was never able to produce an economic surplus, partly due to the harsh weather conditions in the area and a lower concentration of copper than expected.

From early on there were concerns regarding the contamination of reindeer pastures due to heavy metals and chemicals released by the mine. Legal procedures on behalf of local Sami reindeer herders started almost simultaneously with mining operations in the late 60s. The mine was forced to pay a relatively modest sum in compensation, arrived at by calculating the size of pasture areas lost, rather than the direct economical impact on the herders. As a result several herding families moved their operations, while others gave up herding completely.

Because of recent increases in mineral prices mining operations in Biedjovággi are once again being discussed. In 2013 a proposal by the Swedish mining corporation [Artic Gold](#) was narrowly defeated by a 10-9 vote in the Kautokeino council.

A renewed interest in mining is not only a local issue, but also a national one. Both the previous government (a labour-left coalition headed by Jens Stoltenberg) and the current government (centre-right coalition headed by Erna Solberg) have allocated considerable sums to mineral surveys and reports. In a wider perspective the interest in mineral extraction is part of an on-going discourse related to what the Norwegian economy will look like once the majority of large oil fields on Norwegian territory have been exploited and an oil-based economy is no longer viable.

Karasjok

Like Kautokeino the majority of inhabitants in Karasjok have Sami as their first language and around 18% of the population is involved in reindeer herding. It is roughly 18km from the border to Finland and with a varied landscape consisting of tundra, birch- and pine forests. The area has a rich fauna, with rivers that hold an

FRONTIERS OF SOLITUDE

Expedition to Finnmark, Norway 20th – 30th September 2015

abundance of fish. The lowest temperature ever measured in Norway ($-51,4^{\circ}\text{C}$) was measured in Karasjok on New Year's Day 1886.

Sametinget (The Sami Parliament)

Additionally, Karasjok is an important centre of Sami language and culture as it is the seat of the [Sami Parliament](#). The parliament has 39 representatives voted on by 7 constituencies, covering all of Norway and is responsible for running the Sami Development Fund, overseeing the Sami Cultural Fund, developing Sami language and protecting Sami heritage sites.

Sami Center for Contemporary Art

[The Sami Center for Contemporary Art](#) is a foundation started in 1986 by The Sami Artists Union, which aims to support Sami contemporary art and crafts and is currently headed by artist and curator Hjørdis Kurås. The centre includes an exhibition space, shop and residency programme and is located in Karasjok.

In addition to a varied exhibition programme the center frequently collaborates with other arts institutions in the region on festivals such as [Barents Spektakel](#) in Kirkenes. Such collaborations frequently reach across borders and involve artists and institutions from neighboring countries such as Sweden, Russia and Finland.

Kirkenes

Kirkenes is located in the far northeast of Norway near the Russian border. The town is situated on the edge of The Kirkenes peninsula, which lies on the Bøk Fjord, an arm of the much larger Varanger Fjord. It has a population of roughly 3000 a majority of which are Norwegian, but that also includes Sami, Kven, Russians and Finns.

The town has a large harbor from which ore from [The Sydvaranger Mine](#) is exported as well as a nearby military garrison that is tasked with maintaining the six border stations on the border with Russia.

Kirkenes was an important German military base during The Second World War – it was the last town to be occupied by the Germans in 1940 and the first town liberated by the Soviets in 1944.

Today the town houses a [Border Museum](#) and the [The Norwegian Barents Secretariat](#) a state funded organization that aims to stimulate cross-border cultural and commercial cooperation.

Sydvaranger Mine

Large deposits of iron were discovered in [Sydvaranger](#) in 1886, but it was not until the early 1900s that it was technologically feasible to begin extracting the ore. Production started in 1910, but halted with The First World War, falling under bankruptcy protection for much of the 1920s.

FRONTIERS OF SOLITUDE

Expedition to Finnmark, Norway 20th – 30th September 2015

During The Second World War most the equipment and facilities were destroyed during the German retreat. Operations restarted in 1945 with new facilities complete in 1960. The mine had 1500 employees at its peak, before needing substantial grants from the government to stay operational in the late 1970s before finally shutting down in 1996.

However, the mine reopened in 2009 under the ownership of the [Tschudi Group](#). Operations take place year-round including winter. After the ore has been extracted from the open pits it is processed and transported by rail to Kirkenes.

Bøk Fjord Depot

Approximately 2 million tons of waste and chemicals from Sydvaranger is deposited in the Bøk Fjord each year. According to the Institute for Marine Research this has eradicated most of the life along the bottom of the fjord. Smaller, lighter particles travel significantly further affecting life elsewhere in the fjord.

Many locals are pleased that mining operations have resumed, as Sydvaranger is an important economic cornerstone for Kirkenes. However, both environmental organizations and a significant number of locals are concerned with potential long-term effects of depositing waste in the fjord the surrounding wildlife and flora; thus, the practice of depositing waste in the fjord is part of an on-going debate on the effects of sea deposits in general.

Kvalsund

Kvalsund is located north-east from Alta with the centre of the town situated on the Reppar Fjord near the road between Alta and Hammerfest. The municipality includes several fjords and islands with rich forests and rivers further inland making Kvalsund a popular area for summer homes, particularly among people living in the slightly more urbanized city of Hammerfest.

Kvalsund has historically been a Sea Sami (Sami populations that fish or farm rather than herd reindeer) area, but became increasingly mixed during the period of Norwegianization policies (1850-1960) by the Norwegian government and church.

The Reppar Fjord

The Reppar Fjord is 14km long and surrounded by mountains with that peak at around 700 meters above sea level. Large deposits of copper were found along the south side of the fjord around 1900 and the company [Folldal verk](#) ran a mine here from 1972-78. During this period, mining waste was dumped in the fjord, causing damage to fish stocks and thereby affecting the livelihoods of local fishermen.

Due to large deposits of copper in the rock massif [Nussir](#), located to the west of Kvalsund town, plans to once again begin mining and to deposit the resulting waste in the fjord surfaced in 2011. This proposal is being considered by The Norwegian

FRONTIERS OF SOLITUDE

Expedition to Finnmark, Norway 20th – 30th September 2015

Department for Environmental Protection and involves dumping the equivalent of 17 trucks of waste in the fjord every day for the next 20 year. The final decision on whether to allow waste to be dumped in the fjord likely to be subject to a vote in the national parliament within the next year. In addition to possible damage to fish stocks, the mine would likely also disturb local reindeer herds and nearby rivers.

Hammerfest

Hammerfest is one of the oldest cities in Northern-Norway with evidence of settlement dating back to at least 1250. It is located on the coastal island Kvaløya and is linked to the mainland by bridge. Until 1996 it was considered the northernmost city in the world.

In 1809, during the Napoleonic Wars, Hammerfest was attacked by The Royal Navy as Denmark-Norway had aligned with France during the conflict. During WWII Hammerfest was an important base for German U-Boats. Like most of Finnmark the town was completely destroyed in 1944-45 by German forces retreating from advancing Soviet troops.

Today Hammerfest houses [a museum dedicated to the rebuilding efforts after the war](#) and a newly built cultural center that houses a cinema as well as hosting concerts, theater and dance performances.

Snøhvit Petroleum Field

[Snøhvit](#) is a natural gas field situated northwest of Hammerfest and operated by Statoil a Norwegian oil company that is two-thirds state owned. It is the fifth largest gas-field on Norwegian territory and stands out from the rest because all of the production equipment is located on the seabed rather than on a platform on the surface.

The gas is transported along the seabed in pipes to a refinery on [Melkøya](#) outside of Hammerfest. From there the gas is transported on LNG-ships to terminals such as Cove Point on the American east coast. The field provides around 180 local jobs and is the largest industrial project ever undertaken in Northern-Norway. It is scheduled to operate for around thirty more years.

Distances

Alta – Kautokeino:	131 km
Kautokeino – Karasjok:	128 km
Karasjok – Kirkenes:	322 km
Kirkenes - Hammerfest:	494 km
Hammerfest – Alta:	140 km